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MARRNGITMIRRI AND *KALKA*—MEDICINEMAN AND SORCERER—IN ARNHEM LAND*

by

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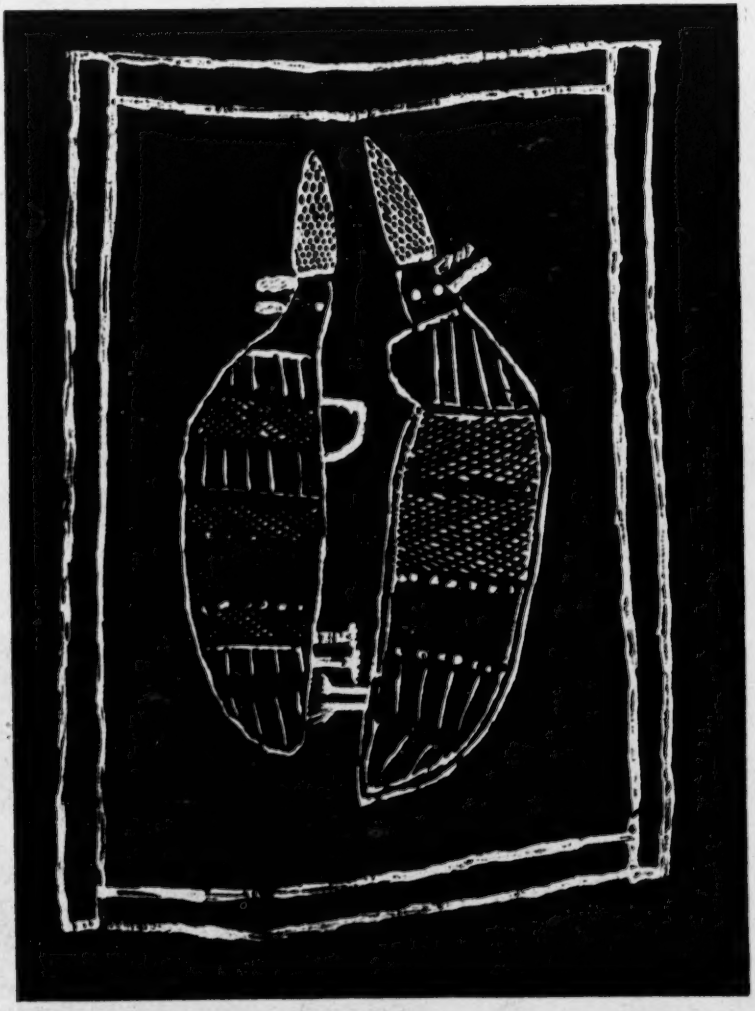

THE TWO 'MARRNGIT' OF MEDICINEMAN WATTIYA, DRAWN BY HIMSELF

Left, the spirit familiar Barratanawi, *right,* Kanyirango. *The white, cross-hatched areas on the heads of the figures represent hair, the lateral projection ears, and the two small circles on the neck region eyes; the cross-hatching on the bodies represents body hair* (daurwur, *as distinct from* marra, *the ha of the head). Wattiya said: that each* marrngit *has a stone* (kumda) *embedded in its sternum* (kumur), *which provides its driving force, and that th force is distinct from its* mart, *spiritual power; that the stone is 'like the wing of a bird'* (nakun binbar warrakan); *that they represent the mall shadow or shade, 'half* birimbir, nakun morkoi,' i.e. *half spirit, like a ghost, like the ghost from a dead person; and, in explanation of their way movement, 'it does not go on foot'* (yakka diango djalkirri maritji).

532 131 The drawings in polychrome from north-
756 eastern Arnhem Land that accompany this paper* were made on sheets of stringy bark (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*) by three medicinemen, called *marrngitmirri*, members of Mildjingi clan of the lower Glyde River, and of two neighbouring clans, Liagauwumirr' and Ngalladar
617 Tjambarpoingo. Mildjingi is a clan of *yiritja* moiety and Liagauwumirr' and Tjambarpoingo are members of the opposite moiety, *dua*, in which certain terminal vowels, notably *i* and *o* are elided as an arbitrary mark of distinction
[117] between clans of different moieties whose members speak similar languages. In Wanguri clan of the Arnhem Bay area the word *kulong* is applied to the medicineman.

776 In each case the figures drawn by the medicineman
787 represent the spirits called *marrngit*, two or more in number, which adopt certain men, often first subjecting
756 them to an ordeal or series of ordeals, after which they are known as *marrngitmirri*—medicinemen—and are vested with the special powers of this cult.

The *marrngit* or spirit familiars of two of the three medicinemen from eastern Arnhem Land who claimed to be *marrngitmirri* are shown in Plates I and J*a*. These *marrngit* were said first to have visited the men whom they later adopted, subjecting them to a series of ordeals. Sometimes they brought sickness, in other cases, according to my informants, they inflicted injuries, sometimes actually breaking bones and almost killing the novice, after which they restored him and then invited the initiate in turn to try his own skill by injuring the *marrngit* and restoring him. After a more or less lengthy period of trial by way of initiation, the *marrngit* finally adopted the *marrngitmirri* and thenceforth helped and guided him in the practice of the cult.

756 According to most of my informants, the cult of the *marrngitmirri* or medicineman in eastern Arnhem Land is restricted to men only, although it is not a sacred cult and is not secret—that is, it does not depend upon ritual or supernatural backing, and is carried out in open camp without any secrecy, in the presence of women and children. Many of the *marrngit*, the spirit familiars them-
[776] selves, were said by my informants to be females. Although women do not appear to become *marrngitmirri* they do
[791 practise as rainmakers. Some of the rainmakers of east
562] Arnhem Land, of whom there were three in Mildjingi clan—the clan of Wilindjango—were women, one of whom was renowned for her prowess with the rites and magical spells of the rainmaker. However, although rain-
[788] making depends upon the understanding and correct observance of certain rituals and the use of the appropriate

* *With Plates I and J*

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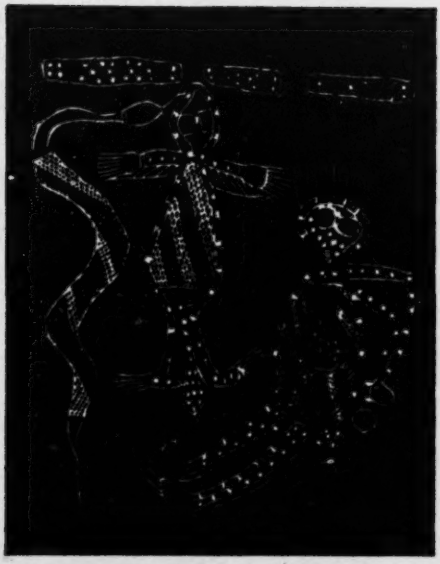
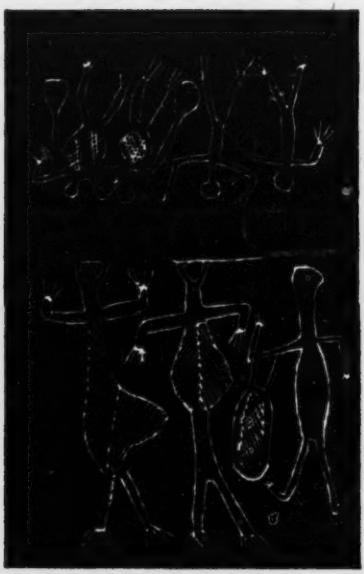


(a) Marrngit of Mun'nyeri'nyie of Tjamparpingo clan. The three flat objects at the top are stones, with holes represented by spots. The winged male marrngit is Mallapurpallamirr, the other his wife (and sister) Barrambit. They come from Gurrumuna on the mainland of Arnhem Land behind Howard Island. Left, the snake Bundango.



(b) The six marrngit of Wilindjango of Mildjingi clan, Lower Glyde River, and the 'shade' (malli) of the marrngitmirri himself, lower right. Next to him are Nari, male, and Martung'dung, the female; the bulge is the womb in which she bore the four junior marrngit above.

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(c) Wilindjango, whose marrngit are shown in (b) above. This man was also a renowned rainmaker of his clan. The basket-like structure on his forehead is ngunak (lit. flesh), dried human flesh or mango (blood) which are used in the practice of magic and ritual cannibalism. The two small wooden pegs projecting from the basket are yel and are made from ironwood (Erythrophlœum laboucherii). They are part of the stock in-trade of the marrngit.

(d) Sorcerer, called ragalk or kalk', Buruns Tribe, Cape Stewart district, north central Arnhem Land, with kandjurma, stiletto-like objects sharpened to a fine point and made from ironwood called maiyin. The ragalk are said to insert these kandjurma into the hearts of their victims by way of the neck, thence down the dorsal aorta. In this way they claim the ragalk draws out the blood of his victim. In Australia these kandjurma are popularly known as 'pointing bones.'

'MARRNGIT,' 'MARRNGITMIRRI' AND 'KALKA'

Photographs (c, d): D. F. Thomson

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magical rites and spells, it does not involve the co-operation of spirit familiars.

The majority of informants stated that the cult of the *marngit* is not a hereditary one, and they asserted that although the son of a *marngitmirri* father may also be *marngitmirri*, membership of the cult does not necessarily pass from father to son. But at least one informant of Wanguri clan, a clan of Mindjikai *barpuro*, declared that in his own clan, of which the principal territory is at Arnhem Bay, a little to the south and east of Elcho Island, the cult of the *marngit* was hereditary and did pass from father to son. On controversial issues of this kind, long discussions often took place among the old men who acted as informants, and finally they would reach agreement and give me their verdict. Far from being careless or merely anxious to please, they took great pains to check information by referring to people who possessed specialized knowledge, and took much trouble in settling any doubtful point. My informants declared that the *marngit* was also hereditary in the Burara tribe, where, however, the cult of the *ragalk* was also established and was certainly dominant. Some conflict, or difference of opinion, does occur in matters of this kind particularly in north-eastern Arnhem Land where there is no hard and fast, or orthodox, view, supported by a large body of opinion.

This means that, as might be expected, in the absence of a written language or an organized body to formalize belief, there is necessarily some degree of flexibility, some scope for individual ideas, and within the atypical, intensely segmentary, social organization of eastern Arnhem Land, this variability tends to be emphasized. Even in matters of kinship, which concerns the entire group, since it regulates all behaviour, differences sometimes occurred and the people would call in old men and submit an intricate or knotty problem to them in the way that I have mentioned above.

It was intended originally to confine this paper to a short account of the *marngitmirri*, translated from the statements of the medicinemen themselves, and to follow this with descriptions of the *marngit*, which are shown in the accompanying plates of actual drawings of their spirit familiars made by these medicinemen. But my attention has been drawn to an article by the late Revd. T. T. Webb published some years ago, 'The Making of a Marrngit,'[2] which contains some errors and misconceptions, and I have therefore extended the scope of this article to discuss the relationship of the medicineman and sorcerer in Arnhem Land and the roles and the distribution of these cults.

In the opening paragraph of this article Mr. Webb says: 'In east Arnhem Land there are two classes of magicians

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756 or medicine-men. Members of the one, whose operations
754 are wholly of an evil character, are known as *ragalk*, while members of the other, whose operations are always of a benign character, are known as *marrngit*, or less frequently *gulang*.'

This statement needs qualification, for the cults of the medicineman or *marrngit* and the sorcerer or *kalka* in Arnhem Land are not quite as simple as suggested in this account, and the *marrngitmirri*—that is, the medicineman, the man who has been initiated and adopted by spirit familiars called *marrngit* who help him in the practice of his cult—really belongs to east Arnhem Land, and to the territory east of the Crocodile Islands, coinciding with the area that lacks a typical tribal organization. The somewhat different cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka*, the sorcerer, flourishes at Cape Stewart and to the south and west of this territory. Its stronghold is central and western Arnhem Land. Here, in the territory of the Burara tribe of Cape Stewart which lies immediately west of the Crocodile Group, and among Raimbar'ngo, Ritar'ngo and other tribes of central Arnhem Land, the cult of the *ragalk* flourishes. An informant of Wanguri clan who was linked by his totemic background with the Wallamango declared that the cult of the *marrngit* did occur in the neighbouring Burara tribe. But the account given by this man was not impartial and unavoidably gave to the *marrngit* of that area a kind of 'aura' of the *kalka* or sorcerer.

It will be clear from what I have said that the two cults are not complementary, except possibly in the Burara tribe. And in east Arnhem Land they certainly do not exist side by side as opposing cults among the same people, as the Revd. T. T. Webb's account implies. The sorcerer or *kalka*, although certainly known to the people east of the Crocodile Islands who live in the stronghold of the *marrngitmirri*, and much feared by them as part of the magical stock-in-trade of the *warnba*, the people of the west (strangers) does not exist as a cult in eastern Arnhem Land. The fear in which the sorcerer is held by these people
[797 resulted from the transfer of the Methodist Mission from
152] Elcho Island, where it was first established, to Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands—which, by coincidence, lies on the western fringe of the territory of the Burara, the very home of the *kalk*'.

756 The present paper is intended to give an account of the
121 *marrngitmirri* and their *marrngit* and particularly to describe the way in which a man of east Arnhem Land is visited by his *marrngit* and initiated as a 'medicineman,' the relation-
[787] ship that exists between the *marrngitmirri* and his *marrngit* or spirit familiars, and the way in which his *marrngit* or spirit familiars test the medicineman before they adopt him.

The coloured plates (I, J) that accompany the paper, as I have stated, represent the *marrngit* drawn by three medicinemen of east Arnhem Land. The descriptions with the plates are translations of the information given to me by the medicinemen themselves, generally in their own languages.

The Kalka *and* Ragalk

754 After I had been working for about two years in eastern Arnhem Land and knew the language well enough to

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speak and to hear most of what was said except when it was idiomatic or spoken very quickly, I made the following note: 'The cult of the *kalka* or *ragalk* properly belongs to the area of Arnhem Land extending from the Burara of Cape Stewart westwards. It did not exist as a cult to the east of this territory, although greatly feared by these people, but it was an important influence to the west as well as among the interior tribes, the Raimbar'ngo, the Ritar'ngo and others from the Derby Creek, lying south and west of Cape Stewart and the Liverpool River.'

And to this record, the following significant note was added: 'It was unknown to the Tjambarpoingo, the Kalbanuk and to most of the Mandjikai—the "sandfly people"—with the exception of the Wallamango, the latter a people of the Crocodile Islands who claim affinity with Mandjikai *barpuro*.' Wanguri clan is also linked with the same group. *Barpuro*? is a term that is difficult to define in the intricate and aberrant social grouping of this area. It is applied in eastern Arnhem Land to loosely integrated clans often occupying discontinuous tracts of territory, geographically sometimes widely separated, but nevertheless having in common at least some vital and significant part of their total totemic heritage.

The immense complexity of this social grouping caused many lengthy digressions among informants and frequently interrupted the collection of long texts in the language to enable difficult points as to the bonds between groups to be clarified and the resultant effects upon the attitudes of people made clear to me. Because the cult of the *ragalk* or sorcerer was known to the Yanango of Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group—a clan of Maringo *malla*—who were on the borderline between the east and the west, with many cultural differences as well as differences in social organization, the impact of the *kalka* upon them was not as sudden or as destructive as it was upon the people of Elcho Island. My informants stressed the fact that the Ritar'ngo of the interior, who occupied a big area of country lying between the Liverpool River to the north and the Wilton (a tributary of the upper Roper) in the south, knew and practised the cult of the *kalka*, as did their neighbours the Raimbar'ngo.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the two cults, the cults of the *marngit* and the *kalka*, are not generally complementary and do not, as Mr. Webb's account implies, occur together among the same people, with the possible exception of the Yanango and Wallamango and the neighbouring Burara. But the Yanango and Wallamango are marginal groups and this has an important influence upon their attitudes towards certain culture traits, and the emphasis placed upon differences tends to exaggerate these.

The more or less benevolent *marngitmirri*, the typical medicineman, a kind of general practitioner, with his spirit familiars, is characteristic of the region east of the Crocodile Islands, extending to Cape Arnhem, where the cult of the *ragalk* does not exist.

I have stated that prior to the transfer of the Mission from Elcho Island west to the Crocodile Group, the people of the Tjambarpoingo (*dua* moiety) and Kopapoingo-

797 speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder
754 Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham,
177 Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port
184 Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it brought the people who had accompanied the Mission into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they
609 came to regard the people of the west—whom they called
186 *warnba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since,
152 resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

797 Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission
728 in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at
722 Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack
609 did not occur.
186 As often occurs when a people are brought into contact with those of a different culture, the natives from the east tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded
532 as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *warnba*, one informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister
835 tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to
684 mention the name of a woman in the presence of her brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirrirri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation, punished by the death of both parties.

582 The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its
835 origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant that members of clans of opposite moieties within the tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry, since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between
582 whom marriage was permitted were actually members of
835 the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their
152 neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that
186 were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of
526 them '*nganak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

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186 cannibalism which they regarded as indispensable to a
266 hunter in order to maintain his prowess at a level that could earn for him the coveted title of *tjambait*.

123 During much of the time—amounting to several years—that I lived in Arnhem Land I hunted with groups of the status of horde, which often claimed one or more *marrngitmirri*. I frequently saw these men practising their cult, and was able to make a detailed study of both *marrngitmirri* and *kalka* while I lived a nomadic life with these people.

Kalka *and* Marrngit

754 The cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka—kalk'* of the Burara—, to which I have referred, is believed to be used to bring about the death of a man who has been made a scapegoat—frequently by a rite of augury—for the death of a member of an enemy horde. Often the victim will be a man against whom the deceased or his group have harboured a grievance of long standing, perhaps because he has failed to honour
[688 some payment such as that obligatory to one who has been
689] present at a *ngarra*—or clan totem—ceremony, to make a ceremonial presentation of *ngata*, food (really vegetable food), or of *gerri*, goods, valuables, to the elders of this clan. Of this obligation they say 'to pay back that *marr*'—to
[776 propitiate the *malli* of the culture hero whose totem is in-
782] volved. This *ngata* and the *gerri* presented by men who have attended the *ngarra* by invitation, are dedicated to the *wangarr* and are said to be *yarkomirri*, *i.e.* sacramental. Failure to discharge the obligation to make expiatory payments of the kind that I have mentioned places a man in danger of death by magic, even after a long period of time.

761 In Arnhem Land the belief is held that the death of any
754 person in full possession of his social personality is due, not to what the white man terms 'natural causes' but to the act of an enemy, often a person who is believed to bear a grudge, real or imaginary, against the deceased. Even death from sickness or drowning, from attack by shark or crocodile, and especially from snake bite, is not regarded as the primary cause, but merely the agent used by an enemy, or by a *ragalk* whose aid he has enlisted, to bring this about. The only exception to the belief about natural death is extreme old age, when, in the words of one of my informants, the people say 'time belong him now'—his time is spent, he has lived his life. Certain types of swellings
[688 and deformities are believed to result from ritual visitation
776 or punishment by the *wangarr*, the totemic ancestors, for
784 the violation, even accidental or inadvertent, of a tabu, particularly on the eating of foods which are prohibited at
753] certain critical stages in a man or woman's relation to his family or horde, as at initiation, on the death of near kin, or during pregnancy. Boils of a type distinguished as *marlung* are believed to be due to ritual punishment and so held as proof of the violation of a tabu, usually on the eating of food that is *duyu* (tabu) at critical stages in a man's life.

753 A man in east Arnhem Land named Nyarrang pointed
776 to a large tumour on his neck and told me that it was due to the *malli birlma—i.e.* a blow from the 'shade' or spirit of
773 an implement called *birlma*—used today as a mallet or hammer in food-preparation by women, and 'found'

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776 originally by the Djangauwo sisters—women culture
[773] heroes, who, in their progress across east Arnhem Land, thrust their yam sticks into the ground as they walked. From each of the holes caused in this way there gushed a spring of water of a special kind called *milmindjarrk*. Certain tabus restrict the drinking of *milmindjarrk* water and my informant Nyarrang declared that the swelling on his neck was due to ritual punishment in the form of a blow from the *malli* of the heavy *birlma*, used by the Djangauwo sisters whose spirits still preside over *milmindjarrk* waters. Some time later, the effect of the blow from the *malli birlma* had become manifest in the form of a swelling. It is characteristic of these people that when 'something is wrong,' when they receive a warning in the
[787] form of an omen or portent, or when 'bad luck' attends their hunting or fishing expeditions, they look back over their lives for some incident which has caused them
[152] uneasiness or concern and which they feel may have incurred the displeasure of the *malli wangarr*, the spirits of the ancestral culture heroes.

756 The role of the *marrngitmirri* is twofold: first, to diagnose sickness or to determine the cause of death, and secondly
[776] to find a scapegoat by the aid of his *marrngit*—who, being
[787] spirits or ghosts, possess occult powers, powers to see things not visible to mortals, which they communicate to the *marrngitmirri*, who in turn passes the information to the kin of the victim. As a rule the verdict of the *marrngitmirri*
[682 is accepted without question and the people proceed to
593] select an avenger. This will be a person within the kinship horizon of the deceased—sometimes a younger brother but often a more distant relation from a clan to which, under an extension of the kinship structure, he has special obligations, which may be reciprocal.

In the marginal area adjacent to the Burara, *i.e.* close to
[754] the territorial stronghold of the *ragalk*—the *marrngitmirri* looks at once for signs of the tell-tale magic of the dreaded *kalka*, just as a man does when seeking the reason for what he accepts as ritual punishment.

754 Even in the culturally homogeneous area of north-east
756 Arnhem Land, the beliefs and ideas about the *marrngit* and
114 *marrngitmirri*, as well as about *ragalk*, vary considerably—necessarily so, in a matter which is strongly subjective. The foregoing reference to the role of the *marrngitmirri* discounts Webb's statement (*loc. cit.*) that this man 'possesses no special influence in the life of his horde or tribe.' It must be apparent that at critical times, when the sentiments of the
[753 kin of a sick or newly deceased man are aroused as they
761] are by the pronouncements of the *marrngitmirri* (which, backed by belief in his *marrngit*, are accepted without question), his influence on the horde in which he lives is one of life and death.

The Kalka *at Work*

754 The *kalka* or sorcerer is believed to be responsible for
753 bringing about the sickness and ultimate death of his
761 victim but he does not profess to diagnose sickness or injury due to magic, which is the role only of the *marrngit*. In practice, *kalka* may operate singly but more generally they work in groups of two or three. A sorcerer is likely

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[753 to be named as a scapegoat by the *marngitmirri* of a
761] neighbouring group when one of its members has died, and to be killed by an avenger who has been presented with a spear, to which is attached a bone, usually a metacarpal bone, taken from the finger of the deceased. One or more of these metacarpal bones are removed after the body has been disinterred. They are cleaned and decorated
[768 with the orange-red feathers of the red-collared lorikeet
628] (*Trichoglossus rubritorques*), *lindiritj*. One of these *maidjaballa*, as they are called, is attached by a short string to the head of the spear and becomes an avenger's pennant. When a man is presented with a spear to which the *maidjaballa* is attached in this way, he is charged with the responsibility of killing the scapegoat. This is usually done by catching the victim off guard and spearing him. Sometimes this man may defer the action for a long enough time for the injured sentiments of the group to be appeased, when a potential blood feud may be averted by an expiatory payment or by a formal ordeal by spear.

[761] In the practice of his cult the *kalka* is believed by the people of the east to waylay his victim in the bush when he is hunting or to invite him to go on a kangaroo hunt. Sometimes the *kalka* may induce his victim to accompany him by claiming to have already killed and cached a kangaroo—which was too heavy for him to carry back to camp alone.

Once he has succeeded in getting the victim away from his friends, the *kalka* has little difficulty in catching him off guard and overcoming him. Generally he will have made a rendezvous with other *kalka* in the bush. These men overpower their victim by knocking him down, then they open his mouth and pull down his lower lip to expose the alveolar border into which they insert the *kandjurma*—made from a long thin piece of ironwood called *maipin*, or from the long bones of a flying fox or the fibula of a kangaroo, sharpened to a fine point. Informants overlooked the fact that in this approach the *kandjurma* would strike the bone of the mandible or lower jaw. To the distal end of this *kandjurma* is attached a rope of human hair which is placed in a shallow trough of tea-tree bark called *tannia* in which the blood drained from the heart is said to be collected. The *kalka*, now aided by his confederates, has rendered his victim unconscious or comatose. As the *kandjurma* is inserted into the heart, which is approached by way of the dorsal aorta, the victim is said to emit a series of deep husky rasping intakes of breath. Each time this occurs the *kalka* pauses, but as soon as it ceases he thrusts the long, sharply pointed *kandjurma* a little farther down the great vessel towards the heart (*tortork*).[4]

The *kandjurma* is guided and shielded by the left hand of the *kalka* as he uses his right hand to thrust the point down to reach the heart.

Meanwhile one of the *kalka* places the *tannia* close to the victim. He now holds the man's head while the blood runs into it; the *kalka* then grasps his victim around the waist and squeezes his body so that all the blood is drained from it, after which he removes the *tannia* and hides it.
[224 The blood collected is made into small parcels wrapped in
784] paper bark and either used in ritual cannibalism or rubbed

[p.100(B)]

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[224 on the eyes, cheeks and arm of a hunter to make him alert
789] and far-seeing—*mel karrkuluk*—and so to aid him in
sighting and approaching game that is difficult to kill,
[554] success with which brings prestige to a hunter. The blood
drawn by a *ragalk* from his victim, or the flesh taken from
[778] the body of a man whose death has been brought about by
a sorcerer, has special potency in magic. It is regarded as
dangerous, *duya*—tabu in a ritual sense by virtue of its
marr—*marr dal* (*marr*, spiritual power, *dal*, strong). It must
therefore be eaten only with due observance of ritual pre-
cautions. In the case of a young man or uninitiated boy,
human flesh, particularly flesh from the victim of a *kalka*,
[789 may be given to him only by an old man who first applies
784] his own axillary sweat to the mouth, face and throat of
the novice so that he will not become sick, and thus ensures
that he receives the benefit of the *marr* without the danger
that he would otherwise incur. On no account may a boy
or a young man touch this flesh or blood with his own
hands.

774 Meanwhile the victim of the *kalka* lies unconscious and
754 is declared by the natives to be dead. They say that his
malli—his ghost—remains with the body, but that his
birimbir departs. The *birimbir* is very near to our idea of
the soul. It resides originally with the *malli ranga*, the
spirit or spirit-manifestation of the totem which remains
always in the *wangarr kapu manotji*, the totemic well or
water hole where it swam until it entered the mother's
body at conception. When the *birimbir* leaves the body of
the victim of the *kalka*, my informants said that it re-
turned to the *kapu manotji*. And they added: 'All same he
die.' It is as if the man has died. For when a man dies his
birimbir returns as described above, to the *kapu manotji* from
which it came and swims there until it is again reincarnated.

754 The *kalka* now proceeds to restore his victim to life.
278 He takes a white stone from his dilly bag. First he rubs on
824 the body the mucilage of an orchid called *djalkurk*, *Dendro-
bium dicuphum*, and then warms the stone, which he places
on the sore—*tji'tji*—or on the victim's chest. He warms
the stone again and now places it on the *maiyang* (throat)
and chest. Then he draws the skin back into place, heats
the stone again and places it on his victim's cheeks, supple-
menting the stone with the blade of his *mangal*—spear-
thrower. My informants said that the penis of the victim
is erect, the tongue hanging out and the bowel prolapsed,
and each of these organs has to be treated and replaced in
position. Sometimes one of the *kalka* will climb a nearby
tree and break down the leafy nest of a green tree ant
(*Œcophylla virescens*)—which exudes a strong, pungent
odour of formic acid and is believed by the natives to
have some therapeutic value. The *kalka* scatters these ants
over the prolapsed intestine, which my informant declared
to be effective in causing it to retract.

754 It was a matter of surprise to me to find a number of men
who were in possession of the *kandjurma*, which are the
stock-in-trade of the *ragalk*, admitted to membership of
the cult, and were even willing to demonstrate to me their
technique in dealing with a victim.

The natives do not pretend that a man subjected to
treatment by *kalka* in the manner described is afterwards

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754 unaware of what has happened to him, but they assert that because of their magic he is unable to tell of his experiences when he returns to camp, although he knows that he is doomed, and prepares to die.

After a more or less prolonged treatment to restore the victim and to cover external evidence of his work, particularly in obliterating the tracks to the place where the body lay, the *kalka* wraps leaves—any leaves—around the hook of the spear-thrower and waves it over the prostrate body of his victim, especially over his head. The victim stirs. My informant simulated the groans and grunts of a man awakening from a heavy sleep.

As he recovers consciousness, the victim thinks 'I have slept deeply.' He thinks 'I have slept too much.' Meanwhile the *ragalk* has hidden himself behind a tree.

'I think somebody has killed me,' *i.e.* worked magic. The *kalka* now springs out from behind the tree and frightens his victim, telling him that he is doomed and that he will die. The victim recognizes the *kalka* and threatens to kill him. He hooks his spear on his spear-thrower but he misses again and again. He has lost heart. He returns to camp, intending to tell his kin what has happened so that they can avenge him. The *kalka*, joined now by his confederates, waylays the victim, and again harries and intimidates him. The man returns to camp but is unable to tell what has happened to him. In two or three days he [152] falls sick. He feels cold and lies all the time close to a fire. He is resigned to his fate and calling his kin around him he says, 'I am going to finish' (I am going to die).

756 The people, who jump to conclusions, ready to see the *kalka*'s work, call on the *marngitmirri* who holds him tightly, examining his body. He sees sores—the *malli* of the wounds made by the *kandjurma*—and he sees that the heart blood has been drained. If the *marngitmirri* is not sure, not ready to accept responsibility for his diagnosis, he will call in others of his cult, or he will wait until [776] evening, when his *marngit* return to him. These often leave the medicinemen during the day and return to them at night. The *marngit* sit on his shoulders or in the *matji-tji* [145] (biting bag), a net basket made from strings and filled tightly with down feathers or with down (*ramman*). The *matji-tji* is slung around the neck and hangs down on the chest by a string. It is carried by men during formal ordeals called *makarratta*, and when fighting in single combat, when they put it in their mouths and clamp their teeth on it. *Matji-tji* are often worn by *marngitmirri* and provide a place of refuge for their *marngit*. The *marngitmirri*, after initiation to the cult, is able to see his *marngit* and talk to them. The people living in the same camp, although unable to see the *marngit*, claim that they can hear the *kaindjarr*—the sound of swift motion—caused by their wings, or more accurately, since not all use wings as motive power, the sound of motion. The *marngitmirri* [774 761] claim to be able to detect the work of *ragalk*, but not to heal their victims, because their heart blood has been [776 787] drained, the *birimbir* has departed and their internal organs injured or removed.

In the years that I lived with the natives in Arnhem Land I frequently saw the *marngitmirri* at work. He claims

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776 787 that his *marngit*, being spirits—supernatural beings—have the power to see spirit things. The *marngitmirri* would often approach his patient as he lay on the ground, carrying [755] in his hand a leafy branchlet. From time to time he would sweep the air and the ground, with a forward motion and then step suddenly aside. The purpose of this was twofold—first, because the *malli* of the *ragalk* might be lurking near and would reveal itself in dodging the branch, and secondly to drive his *marngit* inside the body. The *marngitmirri* would then quickly approach the victim and place one hand over the mouth, the other over the anus. The natives explained that, when the medicineman had driven the *marngit* to the sick man or dead body, they would enter by the mouth or anus and walk about inside, making a minute examination of the organs. By preventing the exit of the *marngit* in this way, the *marngitmirri* could make sure that their examination was a thorough one. Later the *marngit* would tell him what they had seen, for he claims that, after being tested and adopted by the *marngit*, unlike the lay members of his group, he is able to talk to the *marngit* and to hear them when they speak to him.

756
776 Some of the *marngitmirri* said that their *marngit* remained with them for a long period, often for their whole lives. Sometimes they would be absent for days when they went to look for the honey on which they were believed to subsist, in the caves among rocks which they frequent.

Wilindjango of Mildjingi, whose *marngit* are shown in Plate J*b*, said that the *warrakan* (animals)—adding *marngit warrakan*—had first come to him when he was alone in the [787] bush. Originally he had only two. They hovered around and then sat one on each of his shoulders, and he declared that they looked like 'small pigeons.' They folded their wings like birds as they sat, but they talked like *yulngo*—humans.

All the *marngitmirri* with whom I lived and to whom I talked about their cult, agreed that their *marngit* had come to them suddenly and unexpectedly. Their accounts all agreed that in the beginning they had been either incapacitated by injuries inflicted by the *marngit* and later restored by them or had been sick and made well again. Some of the *marngitmirri* said that they had been invited by the *marngit* in turn to test their own skill by injuring the *marngit* and trying to restore them. They declared that this procedure, and these visits, had continued for some time—sometimes for weeks—before the *marngit* had finally adopted them.

The medicinemen, in talking of their *marngit*, referred to them as *warrakan* bird (or animal) or *warrakan kulong*, and declared that the *marngit* often addressed the man whom they had adopted by the kinship term *papa* (father). Sometimes the medicineman applied the term *yoto*, child, to his *marngit*.

The accounts given by several *marngitmirri* agree in saying that their *marngit* did not remain with them continuously but that they visited their *marngitmirri* in his camp early in the morning and at evening, sometimes

remaining with him all night. None of the medicinemen that I met in east Arnhem Land claimed to have a single *marrngit* only, and the number varied from two to four or five or even more, as in the case of Wilindjango, who had six (Plate J*b*).

The *marrngitmirri*, as he gains experience in the cult, is able to see on the body of a victim of secret killing spear wounds which are not visible to ordinary people.

As the drawings in colour in Plates I and J indicate, there is a considerable variation in the concepts of the *marrngit* entertained by the *marrngitmirri*, but all agreed that these are *wakkinngu*—profane, in the sense of non-sacred, with the special implication that they are not associated with, or dedicated to, the *wangarr*, and so not subject to ritual or supernatural sanctions. The *marrngit* and their cult are regarded, therefore, by the natives of Arnhem Land as apart altogether from totemism. This essential distinction was pointed out to me by my informants themselves. They emphasized it frequently by referring to their *marrngit* as *warrakan*—animals—a term that they never used for their totems, except in reference to the actual animal form which the totems sometimes assumed in ancestral times—for, being *wangarr*, they had supernatural powers and were not subject to the restrictions and limitations of ordinary men. They were *wangarr*, hence supernatural.

The people always described their totems as *malli wangarr*—the spirits or shades of the ancestral culture heroes—and therefore, *yarkomirri*, literally with, or having, a name, dedicated ceremonially to the *wangarr*. On ceremonial occasions the obligatory presentations of *ngata* (food) are dedicated to the *wangarr* concerned by the *dalkarramirri*, who acts in the role of high priest. And because of their association with the *wangarr*, all totems or totemic objects are subject to supernatural sanctions and are still watched over by the *malli* of these *wangarr* who guard jealously the observance of the rituals associated with the heritage that they left behind.

The demarcation between what is sacred and what is profane, between *yarkomirri* and *wakkinngu*, emphasizes the recognition by these people of the essential distinction between *marrngit* and totem, between religion and magic.

Notes

[1] The data presented in the paper were obtained when I was under commission by the Commonwealth Government in Arnhem Land, prior to the war, and during the war while O.C. Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit, Norforce.

[2] *Oceania*, Vol. I, 1936, pp. 336–41.

[3] See Donald F. Thomson, 'Two Painted Skulls from Arnhem Land, with Notes on the Totemic Significance of the Designs.' MAN, 1939, 1.

[4] *Tortork* is heart in the strictly anatomical sense, but some of my informants declared that it was also the seat of the *malli*, or shade, a kind of non-material or spiritual manifestation, which has nothing to do with the shadow.

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